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# COVID-19 and HIV:

**Sustaining HIV gains and  
building back better and  
fairer HIV responses**

**Follow up to the Thematic Segment from  
the 48<sup>th</sup> PCB meeting of 2 July 2021**

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## Background to the 48th PCB Thematic Segment

- A PCB Working Group was established to oversee the preparation of the background note and the agenda, including the panelists and speakers of the day.
- The objective was to:
  - Provide an overview on the progress in responding to the colliding pandemics of COVID-19 and HIV since December 2020,
  - Analyze lessons learnt and based on those, and
  - Reflect on how to build better and fairer HIV responses.

# Background to the 48th PCB Thematic Segment

- The session brought together:
  - political and global health leaders,
  - community experts,
  - programme leaders, and
  - implementing partners
- **The thematic segment background note included recommendations that were resonated by speakers during the actual session that lay good ground for informing the PCB's upcoming decisions.**

## Key messages from the COVID-19 & HIV thematic segment



- COVID-19 has impacted **lives and livelihoods**.
  - It has impacted **essential health and social services including HIV services, mental health and gender-based violence services**.
  - It has **deepened inequalities** between and within countries.
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- **Women** have been **hardest hit, and key** and vulnerable populations, people living in **informal settlements, migrants and prisoners** – continue to be more exposed, more discriminated against and likely not to have access to health and social protection services.

# Key messages from the COVID-19 & HIV thematic segment

Turning a crisis into an opportunity:

- **Multi-month Dispensing**
- **Differentiated** service delivery
- Innovations and **agile** service delivery: **virtual** platforms, **home** tests, etc.



→ Making use of the effective HIV infrastructure: using HIV and TB diagnostics and laboratory infrastructure and community ecosystems for addressing COVID-19.

# Key messages from the COVID-19 & HIV thematic segment



## Important lessons

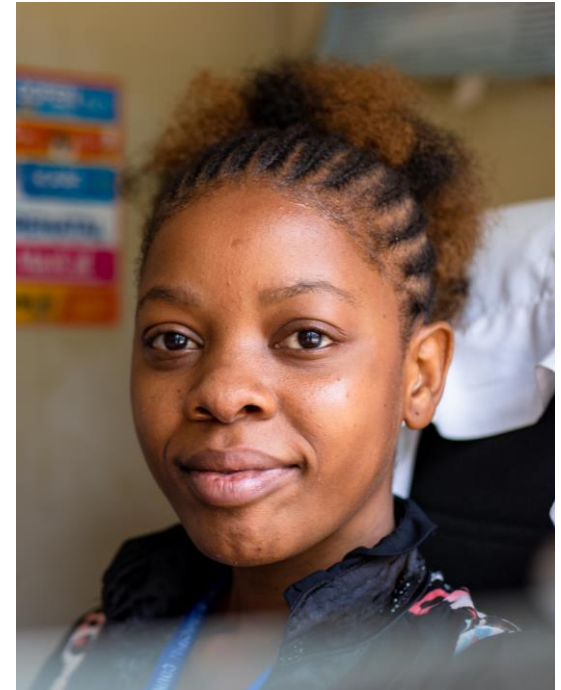
- Need for **solidarity** between and within countries in a global and interconnected world
- Need for **health professionals** to work hand in hand with **communities** and **politicians** to build up trust and fight misinformation
- Requirement for **complex responses** to complex issues that address a person's needs in a **holistic manner across health services, mental wellbeing and social protection.**



# Key messages from the COVID-19 & HIV thematic segment

## Reimagining systems for health: new and improved systems for health

- Lessons learned from the HIV response provide critical insights for countries to reimagine systems for health that are optimally effective, accountable, inclusive, equitable, rights-based and sufficiently resourced and COVID-19-relevant services should be accessible, integrated, tailored and people-centred.



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**Progress on COVID-19  
and HIV since the  
thematic segment**

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# Progress on COVID-19 and HIV since the thematic segment

## COVID-19 Response Mechanism Applications Virtual Technical Support

- Remote desk peer reviews, virtual helpdesk, virtual community of practice resource hub/website and virtual clinics/webinars
- There were 19 draft C19RM applications in English or French were conducted by experts from the UNAIDS and a team of consultants

## Continued COVID-19 HIV services tracking data to inform programs

- The data are collected monthly and covering various HIV services interventions including HIV testing and treatment, PMTCT, gender-based violence monitoring, HIV prevention services including VMMC and condoms

## Continue support in continuing HIV services in the time of COVID-19

- the full implementation of **WHO multi-month dispensing of ART guidelines**
- the **multi-month dispensing of HIV prevention commodities**, including PrEP, condoms, needles and syringes as well as take home dosages for PWIDs
- Safe continuation of **outreach prevention services** and **virtual interventions**

# Progress on COVID-19 and HIV since the thematic segment

## Giving a voice to those left behind

- Economic impact of COVID-19 on the income of adolescent girls and women living with or at risk of HIV in Nigeria and South Africa, 2021

## Working with affected communities and networks to hear and address their needs

- Supporting communities of PLHIV, and women living with HIV, to carry out rapid needs assessments on the challenges faced by communities in the context of COVID-19 and mobilized resources to address the identified

## Assesing and addressing human rights for people in homeless situations, health problems and specific vulnerabilities

- For example, in Brazil

## Addressing social protection in the time of COVID-19

- UNAIDS and partners implemented a range of life-changing HIV and social protection interventions in the COVID-19 era in more than 14 countries

# Progress on COVID-19 and HIV since the thematic segment

## Addressing social protection in the time of COVID-19

- UNAIDS and partners implemented a range of life-changing HIV and social protection interventions in the COVID-19 era in more than 14 countries
- For example, in the Dominican Republic, the work resulted in successful inclusion of 15,002 people living with HIV in the national social protection programme to support people facing income loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Supporting implementation through technical reports, guidance and implementation tools for countries

- For example, A report on community-led responses in the context of COVID-19: Holding the line: communities as first responders to COVID-19 and emerging health threat
- The report documents the efforts of community-led organizations to sustain the HIV response while responding to COVID-19 and shares the experiences of community-led organizations (in their own words) and highlights their flexibility and resilience in pandemic response

## Recommendations

- Practices that were introduced/accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic into HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care, including **multimonth dispensing**, use of **virtual platforms**, and scale-up of **differentiated, people-centred and community- and home-based HIV services** should be sustained.
- **Investments** need to be adequate and **flexible funding arrangements** should be prioritized to ensure HIV service continuity in the context of major public health emergencies.
- The **active involvement of communities and civil society** in the response to HIV, COVID-19 and future pandemics should be sustained and investments in **community-based programmes** need to be sufficient.
- It is important to **build forward better** in a more equitable and inclusive manner from the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the global AIDS epidemic, including by providing **equitable and stigma and discrimination-free access to HIV, health and social protection services**, including for **key populations and other populations particularly impacted by the HIV and COVID-19 pandemics**.

